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SUBJECT: KINSHASA HOSTS GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE PREPARATORY MEETING

11. (U) Summary. National coordinators for the Great Lakes Conference (GLC) held their second preparatory meeting in Kinshasa from October 19-23. The core group of seven members was enlarged to eleven with the addition of Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, and Angola. President Kabila addressed the meeting to convey full DRC support for the GLC process. Participants adopted a tentative statement of principles for the Dar-es-Salam summit scheduled for November 19-20. End Summary.

Kinshasa Hosts Regional Preparatory Meeting

12. (U) Kinshasa hosted the second meeting of national coordinators for the Great Lakes Conference (GLC) from October 19 to the 23rd. The GLC will meet in Dar-es-Salam on November 19 and 20th, and it will address four main areas; peace and security, good governance and democracy, economic development and regional integration, and humanitarian and social issues. This conference is being coordinated by the UN SRSG for the Great Lakes Region Ibrahima Fall, with support from the European Union and the African Union and financing from the Netherlands and Canada.

13. (U) The Kinshasa meeting included representatives from the original seven core members (Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Zambia, and the DRC) and the new four members (Sudan, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, and Angola) who will enjoy the same status as the original members. President Kabila gave a speech on the opening day of the meeting which signaled the DRC's full commitment to the GLC. SRSG Fall and DRC national Coordinator, Baudouin Hamuli, led the meetings and working sessions.

14. (SBU) Congolese sources present at the Kinshasa meeting expressed satisfaction with the results, which included a preliminary declaration of principles to be signed by the heads of state at Dar-es-Salam. Participating members also presented their tentative agendas, which they will continue to refine during their next meeting of national coordinators scheduled for November 8-10 in Kampala. According to these sources, an important development was improved relations between the Rwandan and the DRC delegations. They noted that the U.S. sponsored tripartite talks among Rwanda, Uganda, and the DRC had also helped build confidence and had been specifically mentioned at the meeting as a positive initiative that the GLC process would support.

GLC: A Process Rather than an Event

15. (SBU) Hamuli told poloff October 26 that participants envisioned the GLC as a process that had already started, rather than as a one-time event in Dar es Salaam. In his view, the coordinating meetings in Bujumbura and Kinshasa had lessened regional tensions improved communication among the members, and served as confidence-building forums for the eventual summits. He noted that the Dar-es-Salam conference will adopt principles, which national commissions will then try to implement with concrete measures during the ensuing six months. Another summit of heads of state will then take place in June 2005.

16. (SBU) Hamuli said President Kabila will attend the Dar-es-Salam summit along with heads of state of all other 10 members. UN Secretary General Kofi Anan, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, and high level delegations from the European Union, the African Union, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, Canada and The Netherlands are also expected to attend the GLC summit.

Comment

17. (SBU) The Kinshasa preparatory meeting for the GLC provided an opportunity to the DRC to play a more prominent role in this regional initiative. Kabila's participation also signaled a stronger DRC commitment to this process -- a change from prior ambivalence about the GLC, motivated by suspicion over Rwanda's intentions. To the extent that the Kinshasa meeting and the overall GLC process help build regional confidence and improved communication channels, they can be seen as a positive steps. Nonetheless, the broad agenda and enlarged membership will make it more difficult

for the GLC to achieve concrete results. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether national commissions will be able to turn general principles on peace and security, economic development and regional integration, democracy and good governance, and humanitarian and social issues into practical regional initiatives. End Comment.
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